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16 May 1956

WESTERN REACTION TO SOVIET ARMS CUT

1. Free World reaction to the Soviet announcement of a unilateral reduction in armed forces has so far consisted mainly of public statements from official quarters in NATO countries. Comments have focused on its inadequacy as a disarmament move and on its intended propaganda impact in the West. No nation has yet indicated it will change its own military plans.
2. The announcement has been widely welcomed insofar as it heralds a reduction of the threat from Soviet land armies.
3. French UN delegate Moch and the British Foreign Office stressed the continued need for progress toward international control of wider disarmament. Moscow's failure to touch on its nuclear warfare capabilities was also noted as a serious gap.
4. Both Moch and Canadian external affairs secretary Pearson pointed out the Soviet intention of inducing Western reductions and of gaining favor for contributing to peace. Pearson noted the temptation the announcement offers to weaken NATO.
5. In West Germany the announcement was received with considerable dismay. Official circles saw the destruction of their hopes of using the major powers' approach to a disarmament agreement as a lever to achieve German unity.

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